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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management

Wenatchee Resource Area
1133 N. Western Avenue
Wenatchee, Washington 98801

Final

December 1988

Yakima River Canyon Recreation Management Plan

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As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major resonsibility for American Indian reservation communities for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

BLM–OR–PT–88–15–1792

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wenatchee Resource Area
1133 N. Western Avenue
Wenatchee, Washington 98801

December 16, 1988

Dear Reader:

Thank you for the interest and support that you have contributed to the Yakima River Canyon planning effort. Without it the completion of this first stage would have been much more difficult.

Your continued involvement will be necessary as we begin to implement the plan and proceed with the river management planning phase.

As the plan is implemented, a series of newsletters will be issued to track the implementation steps and solicit your assistance. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely yours,

James F. Fisher
Wenatchee Resource Area Manager

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wenatchee Resource Area
December 1988

Final
Yakima River Canyon
Recreation Management Plan

Recommended by:
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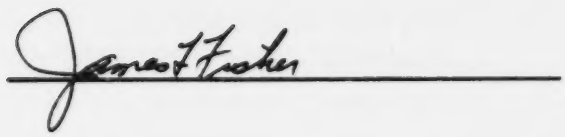

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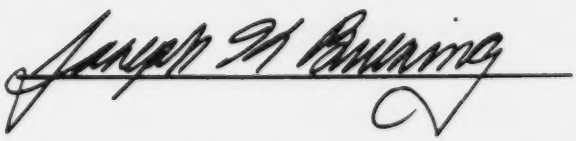

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Part 1

Introduction

The Yakima River Canyon (YRC) is located just east of the Cascade Mountain range, between the cities of Ellensburg and Yakima, Wash. It extends for nearly 24 of the more than 35 river miles that separate these two cities (see map).

The YRC for many years has been a popular place for fishing and hunting. As a result of its popularity, the Washington State Department of Wildlife (WSDW) and the Bureau of Land Management signed a cooperative management agreement to manage the public lands in the YRC for fishing and hunting. This agreement resulted in the development of three recreation sites on BLM Lands along the Yakima River: Roza; Squaw Creek; and Umtanum Creek.

A boat launch was constructed at the Roza recreation site and two pit toilets were installed at each site. The popularity of this area has grown. Fishermen and hunters use these sites intensively throughout the year. More and more effort has been required to maintain them. Over the years, this area has attracted other types of recreation uses, primarily rafting, boating, picnicking, and camping. These uses now rival, and in some instances overshadow, the fishing and hunting activities.

To further emphasize the recreational importance of the YRC, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission proposes construction of an 81 unit campground on State land near the village of Thrall.

As a result of the change in use, the WSDW determined that it no longer could justify the expense of its participation in the cooperative management of the YRC. Therefore, in July 1987, the WSDW requested that the cooperative agreement terminate on May 1, 1988, thus allowing BLM time to execute a smooth transition from an inactive management status to a more intense management status.

BLM subsequently scheduled public meetings in Yakima and Ellensburg in November 1987. During these initial public scoping meetings several questions arose such as: Should additional land be acquired; should other management options be considered; what type of visitor use data is needed; should BLM develop a coordinated river management approach on this stretch of the Yakima River; and/or should BLM prepare a river management plan that includes a plan for the three recreation sites. Because the recreation sites required immediate attention and because the river management planning options would require more public involvement, information, and time than was available, it was decided that a two-phase planning approach was needed. Therefore, the actions presented here are separated into two phases. Phase 1 concerns management actions focusing on the immediate problem of resolving the issues identified for the three recreation sites. Phase 2 concerns the issues of coordinated river management.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this plan is to provide BLM a basis for making management decisions relating to federal lands within the YRC. The primary focus of this plan will be on the recreation sites of Umtanum Creek, Squaw Creek, and Roza. A secondary purpose is to gather information over the next three years for the preparation of a river management plan for the YRC Recreation Area.

Relationship to Land Use Planning

The federal lands in the YRC were identified in the Yakima River Canyon Unit Resource Analysis in 1971 and again in the Spokane District Resource Management Plan as requiring special management with emphasis on fishing, hunting, and other forms of recreation. The cooperative management agreement with the WSDW was the means by which this management emphasis was implemented. As stated previously, this cooperative agreement has been terminated; Management of these lands for recreation and wildlife habitat purposes, however, will continue under BLM administration.

Setting and Multiple Resource Values

Location

Umtanum Creek, Squaw Creek and Roza recreation sites all are located along the Yakima River within the Yakima River Canyon area.

This canyon is located in south-central Washington. It extends for nearly 24 river miles, starting from a point approximately five miles south of the city of Ellensburg to its terminus about two miles into Yakima County.

There are no communities or major concentrations of people in the area. However, there are two major communities situated near the north and south ends of the canyon. Ellensburg, population 11,400, is near the north end, and the city of Yakima, population 49,590, is located near the south end.

Access

Access to the YRC recreation sites is provided by State Highway 821. This highway parallels the Yakima River and until completion of Interstate 82 served as the primary route of travel between Ellensburg and Yakima. Highway 821 is designated as a State Scenic Highway by the State of Washington.

Area and Ownership

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 15 parcels of public land totaling more than 4,000 acres in the Yakima River Canyon. Six of these parcels lack legal and physical access. The remaining nine parcels are accessible via the Yakima Canyon Scenic and Recreational Highway. Most of the lands are in Kittitas County (See map).

Table 1 presents shoreline ownership in an area from the WSDW's fishermans access point off Ringer Road in the southwest corner of section 30, T.17 N., R. 19 E. to approximately one mile south of Selah Butte at the southern end of section 4, T. 14 N., R. 19 E. There are approximately 21.5 river miles or 43 miles of shoreline in this segment of the Yakima River.

Table 1—Shoreline Ownership

Owner	Shoreline Miles[1]	Percent of Total
United States (BLM)	12.1	28
State	12.45	29
Private	17.65	41
Other Federal	1.0	2
Total Shoreline	43.0	100

[1]One river mile = two shoreline miles.

Climate

The YRC is located in an arid climate. The average annual rainfall ranges from seven to 10 inches. Fifty percent of this falls in the four months from October through January.

Snowfall ranges from 15 to 30 inches annually with accumulated depths of five to 20 inches.

During the warmest months temperatures range from highs of 85 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit to lows of 55 to 65 degrees. Periodic temperatures reaching in excess of 100 degrees are common.

During the winter months, temperatures range from highs of 25 to 35 degrees with lows of 15 to 25 degrees. Maximum temperatures are below freezing on 20 to 40 days of the year.

The prevailing wind is from the west and northwest.

Fog and cloudiness in the valleys is common during the colder months.

Topography

The topography varies from steep slopes and high ridges to small level coves and bottom lands of the Yakima River and its tributaries.

The highest point is 3,225 feet above sea level at Baldy Peak. The lowest point is 1,250 feet in elevation at the point where the river leaves the planning area.

Hydrology

The Yakima River is one of the principal streams draining the east slope of the Cascade Mountain range. It meanders through the Yakima Canyon in a southerly direction for a distance of about 24 miles.

The river enters the unit at an elevation of 1,440 feet and drops about 7.9 feet per mile, leaving the unit at 1,250 feet in elevation.

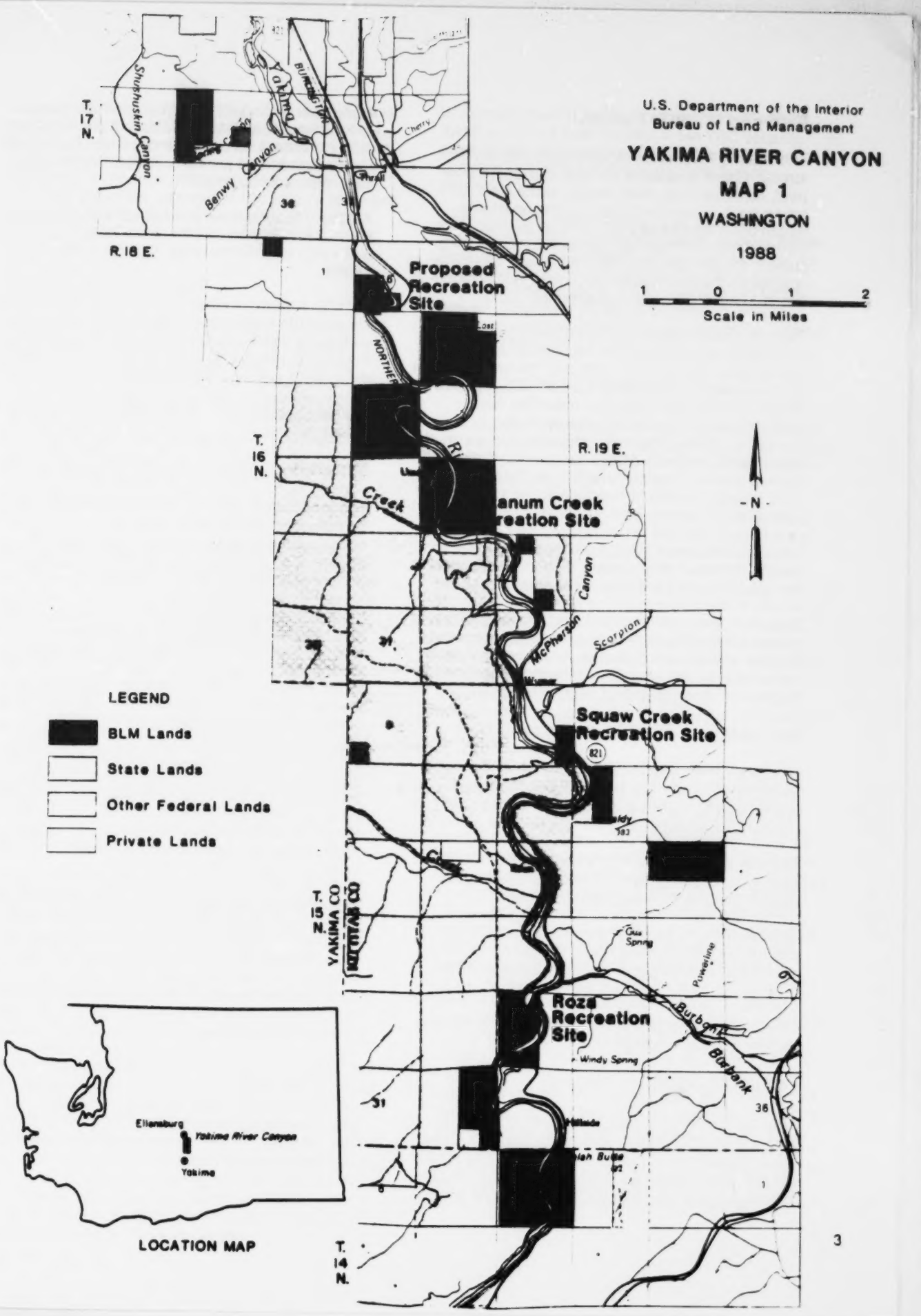
The main tributaries to the river in the planning unit are Umtanum Creek, Burbank Creek, Squaw Creek and Roza Creek.

Flow data gathered by the US Geological Survey for the Yakima River indicate that peak flows occur during June, July and August. The mean annual discharge is approximately 2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) with a maximum of about 6,000 cfs and a minimum flow of about 200 cfs.

Vegetation

Big sagebrush *(Artemisia tridentata)* and bluebunch wheatgrass *(Agropyron spicatum)* are the dominant species in the planning area. Cusick bluegrass *(Poa cusickii)* and Idaho fescue *(Festuca idahoensis)* are found in the plant composition at the higher elevations and on the north exposures where the soil is moderately deep.

The shallow range sites support increasing amount of stiff sagebrush *(Artemisia rigida)*, buckwheats *(Eriogonum species)* and Sandberg bluegrass *(Poa secunda)*, while needle grasses *(Stipa species)* tend to be the prevalent grass species found growing on sandy sites. Ponderosa pine *(Pinus ponderosa)* trees are scattered throughout the lower elevations and bottomlands with alder, aspen, dogwood, cottonwood and willows more or less forming a greenbelt along the river's edge.


U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
YAKIMA RIVER CANYON
MAP 1
WASHINGTON
1988
1 0 1 2
Scale in Miles
T. 17 N.
R. 18 E.
R. 19 E.
T. 16 N.
T. 15 N.
T. 14 N.
Proposed Recreation Site
Squaw Creek Recreation Site
Roza Recreation Site
YAKIMA CO
KITTITAS CO
Shushuskin Canyon
Yakima
Cherry
Benwy Canyon
Scorpion
McPherson
Canyon
Gas Spring
Powerline
Burbank
Windy Spring
N
LEGEND
BLM Lands
State Lands
Other Federal Lands
Private Lands
Ellensburg
Yakima River Canyon
Yakima
LOCATION MAP

Fish and Wildlife Habitat

The Yakima River is considered a blue-ribbon trout stream. Game species in the river include rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, dolly varden, some German brown trout, small-mouth bass, occasional large-mouth bass, steelhead trout, chinook salmon, Coho salmon, and whitefish. Non-game fish include carp, sucker, sculpin, lamprey and squaw fish. Big-game species on the unit include mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, California bighorn sheep, and cougar.

The only upland "small" game mammal on the unit is the Nuttalls cottontail-rabbit. Populations are considered good on the western portion of the area and poor on the eastern portion. Other upland game species include chukar, gray partridge, mourning dove, California quail, ring-necked pheasant, and sage grouse. Waterfowl that utilize the area include great blue herons, mallards, mergansers, wood ducks and Canada geese. Nesting densities are estimated at 1-1/2 broods per mile of river with about 150 birds produced.

The YRC has one of the highest concentrations of nesting raptors in Washington. Eleven species nest in the canyon and an additional nine species visit the canyon in the winter or during spring and fall migrations. American kestrels, red-tailed hawks, and prairie falcons are the most common breeding raptors and the bald eagle is one of the most conspicuous winter visitors. Great horned owls are the most common of the five species of owls that nest in the area.

Recreation

Initially the YRC was used primarily for hunting and fishing. This aspect has not changed. Float trips, power boating, camping and picnicking now rival hunting and fishing in use.

Recently there has been an increased interest in backpacking, particularly in the major tributary canyons of Umtanum Creek and Roza Creek.

Rockhounding is another recreational pursuit. It is a continuous activity in the spring and summer. The petrified wood is of good quality and occurs in Sec. 4, T. 14 N., R. 19 E.; and Sec. 20, T. 16 N., R. 19 E.

Other activities include photography, wildlife viewing and general sightseeing.

Cultural Resource Values

Only 23 PaleoIndian sites have been reported in Washington State and unfortunately many of these are small surface sites that were collected by hobbyists and poorly reported. There is no known Pleistocene-age site in the recreation area, but one was found near the mouth of the Yakima River and a second was located 30 miles east of the recreation area at Vantage on the Columbia River. Because of a limited data base it is very difficult to predict where other sites may be found.

At least one village site is known of in the recreation area. At the juncture of Umtanum Creek and the river a site with several housepits was excavated in the 1960s.

In 1812, Alexander Ross explored the Yakima River basin for the American Pacific Fur Co. Initially there was some hostility between the existing residents of the canyon and the trappers, but fur trade brigades did operate actively in the canyon.

Artifact collection without a permit is prohibited on all federal lands.

Minerals

The only current mineral production in the area is rock for cofferdam construction, road building, and maintenance, although there is potential for production of diatomite, oil and gas. Mineral activities have resulted in the disturbance of about 40 acres.

Diatomite was produced from several mines in the area prior to the 1950's. The abandoned pit in SW1/4NE1/4, Sec. 17, T. 15 N., R. 19 E., produced for several years before 1933. The largest producing mines were outside the area to the east in what is now the Yakima Firing Center. The Yakima Firing Center contains the largest commercial diatomite deposit in Washington, with a value estimated in billions of dollars. Past production in the State was estimated at 10-14,000 tons/year, with an unknown percentage coming from these deposits. Mills previously operated at Roza and Wymer. The mines were closed by condemnation proceedings in the late 1950's when the deposits were included in the Yakima Firing Center.

Oil and gas leases have been issued for all of the federal mineral estate within the recreation area. This includes 4,210.5 acres of federal surface/federal minerals and 2,311.36 acres of private surface/federal minerals. In 1981-82, exploratory wells near Roza Dam revealed substantial quantities of natural gas. Exploratory drilling is continuing elsewhere in the Columbia Basin.

Rock and gravel were removed from various pits in Sec. 9, 16, and 28, T. 15 N., R. 19 E., and Sec. 20 and 33, T. 16 N., R. 19 E., for road building and maintenance in the unit. Material from the pits in Sec. 28 also has been used recently for construction of a cofferdam at Roza Dam.

Gold was mined during the 1930's from a small gravel bar in the NW 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of Sec. 10, T. 15 N., R. 19 E. Small piles of gravel and a pond are all that remain of the workings that covered approximately five acres. At present gold prices, the small amount of production which occurred in 1934 would be valued at about $7 per cubic yard. Current gold mining activities have been limited to recreational dredging and panning.

Grazing Management

Grazing on BLM lands is regulated under Section 15 of the Taylor Grazing Act. In the YRC area, 295 animal unit months of livestock use currently are authorized on four allotments. Of these 295 AUM's, 32 are for domestic sheep. The remaining 263 are for cattle. These four allotments involve 2,085 acres of the 4,210 acres of federal lands in the YRC.

User Profile and Visitation Estimates

The Yakima River Canyon is rapidly becoming recognized as a prime recreational area throughout the state. Outstanding recreational opportunities are available in the YRC, including fishing, hunting, drift boating, rafting, water skiing, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, photography, nature study, rock-hounding and camping.

Party Sizes

Party sizes range from as small as one or two to as many as 15 to 20 people. The smaller groups usually are fishermen. The larger groups usually are associated with boating or rafting activities. Occasionally, group size may exceed 50 people.

Length of Stay

Many visitors to the YRC come from nearby towns, and the lengths of stays usually are of short duration (two to six hours). Longer stays (one to two days) also occur and usually are associated with people who travel from outside the immediate area.

Visitation Estimates

Accurate visitor use data is lacking. However, the information that is available indicates that several thousand people float this river each year. On some weekends, 200 to 300 vehicles have been observed at the Roza recreation site alone. Comparable numbers also have been noted at the Umtanum Creek site. The proximity of the YRC to the towns of Yakima and Ellensburg results in heavy weekday and evening usage during the warm spring and summer months. It's location relative to Interstates 90 and 82 affords easy access to the YRC for residents of Seattle, Spokane, and the Tri-Cities areas.

In addition, more than 40 fishing clubs notified BLM that they have a keen interest in the YRC because most of their members fish this stretch of the river at one time or another during spring and summer periods.

Spot-checking of the YRC by BLM personnel in the summer of 1987 indicated that visitor use was higher than previously anticipated. Indications were that on any given weekend period from June to August, anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000 people could be observed using the YRC for either boating, rafting, fishing or camping. Weekday use was lower, ranging from 500 to 1,000 per day.

Management Issues

The recognition and resolution of important issues is the key to successful planning and management. This section identifies the issues that will be addressed in the management plan in Part III.

Issue 1. California bighorn sheep. Portions of the Yakima River Canyon (YRC) provide crucial habitat for bighorn sheep. Increasing recreation use in the YRC could result in increased pressures (i.e. disturbance) on the bighorn sheep lambing ground.

Issue 2. The Yakima River Cliffs and Umtanum Ridge Area of Critical Environmental Concern. This ACEC was designated in the Spokane Resource Management Plan in an effort to preserve habitat for two federal-candidate plant species. Any management actions proposed for the YRC must be designed to avoid impacts to the ACEC.

Issue 3. Health and safety. Recreation use in the YRC has increased dramatically over the past 10 years. As a result, the three sites: Roza; Squaw Creek; and Umtanum Creek, have had to absorb most of the pressures. The toilet and trash collection facilities originally designed for fishermen and hunter have had to absorb additional pressures from boaters, hikers, floaters and campers. This has resulted in a use in excess of what these sites originally were designed to handle. Sanitation, litter, lack of room for camping trailers and floater traffic, and other user conflicts in a limited space must be addressed.

Issue 4. Parking and Traffic Control. As stated under Issue 3 (health and safety) the three recreation sites in the YRC were designed for fishing and hunting. These no longer are the dominant uses. On holidays such as the Fourth of July weekend, more than 130 automobiles and campers with boat trailers have been counted on the Roza recreation site alone. These areas initially were designed for a dispersed parking arrangement. Consequently they can handle only a portion of the present weekend loads. This has produced spillover parking along the highway and conflicts between the various recreationists.

Issue 5. Trespass of private lands adjacent to recreation sites. As recreation use of the three recreation sites in the YRC has increased, a spillover affect on private lands has occurred. This has resulted in damage and/or destruction to both government property, such as fences, and private property, such as crops or structures. Therefore, management of the recreation sites must consider carrying capacity.

Issue 6. Fire damage. Resource values include crucial bighorn sheep lambing grounds, as well as the area's high visual and scenic qualities. High-use periods of the three recreation sites coincide with the normal high fire danger period, (i.e., May 15 - Sept. 15). Large man-caused wildfires have occurred in this area in the recent past. Management prescriptions must address prevention of wildfire.

Issue 7. Camping, picnicking, day-use. Initially, these three recreation sites were intended to support fishing and hunting. Over the years this use has grown to include camping, picnicking, power boating, water skiing, rafting, and other day-time activities. The existing facilities no longer can adequately sustain such use. Improvements and modifications are necessary to provide for a safe and enjoyable recreational experience for all users. Visitor use restrictions also may be necessary.

Issue 8. Land ownership. There is a limited amount of public land in the YRC available to accommodate the increased recreational demand. In order to accommodate the increased recreational uses, and mitigate associated trespass and access problems, the public has recommended, through oral and written comments, that BLM acquire key private tracts now being abused by use. They also recommend all state and federal agencies pursue land exchanges or cooperative management agreements for total river management.

Issue 9. Law enforcement. The Washington State Department of Wildlife, Kittitas County Sheriff, and the Washington State Patrol reported numerous infractions occurring at these recreation sites. These infractions ranged from domestic quarrels and use of illicit drugs and alcohol to unsafe discharging of firearms and open vandalism of public and private property. None of these existing problems, nor the other issues, can be resolved properly without adequate law enforcement. The remoteness of the area makes it difficult for existing law enforcement authorities to patrol these areas on a regular basis.

Issue 10. Addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System. During the comment period on the draft plan, nominations were made from several individuals and user groups requesting that this stretch of the Yakima River be evaluated for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System under the Recreational River designation.

Part II

Management Objectives and Constraints

The Yakima River Canyon will be managed to preserve its natural qualities. Visitor and resource management will strive to enhance opportunities for high quality recreation experiences. Recreation and other resource uses will be permitted to the extent that the natural and cultural characteristics of the river environment are not degraded.

The following objectives will guide future management and use of the Yakima River Canyon. In accomplishing objectives, the BLM will involve and cooperate with other public agencies, private interests and resource users.

Resource Management Objectives

(1) Provide for safe, healthy, and lawful use of the Yakima River Canyon resources.

(2) Maintain and/or enhance the scenic, cultural and natural qualities within the Yakima River Canyon corridor.

(3) Provide for a diversity of recreational experiences and allow other compatible resource management opportunities.

Management Constraints

Factors which, because of law, policy, regulation or other planning commitments influence the development of management actions presented in Part III include:

1. Four grazing leases which include 1,522 acres of public land within allotment boundaries.

2. The Yakima River Cliffs and Umtanum Ridge Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

3. The Washington State Scenic and Recreational Highway (Highway 821).

4. Significant historic and prehistoric sites located in the YRC.

5. Limited escape cover and nesting habitat for many wildlife species.

6. Private campgrounds located along the river.

7. Complex ownership pattern of the lands within the YRC.

8. Multi-agency jurisdiction within the YRC.

Part III

Management Actions

On the succeeding pages, the issues and objectives which were discussed in Parts I and II are presented along with the planned management actions.

Phase 1 (Management actions pertaining to Roza, Squaw Creek, and Umtanum Creek recreation sites.)

Management Objective: Provide for safe, healthy, and lawful use of the Yakima River Canyon resources.

Issues

- Health and safety.
- Parking and traffic control.
- Trespass of private lands adjacent to recreation sites.
- Fire damage.
- Law enforcement.

Management Actions

1. Promote water safety etiquette at the boat launches and rafting take-out points.

2. Redesign the Roza recreation site with emphasis on reducing congestion and designate it as a day-use area.

3. Improve the boat ramp at the Squaw Creek recreation site.

4. Upgrade restroom facilities to BLM standards.

5. Construct traffic control barriers at the three recreation sites.

6. Designate separate parking areas for passenger vehicles and other vehicles with boat trailers at Roza recreation site.

7. Establish no-parking areas at the boat ramps and floater take-out points at Squaw Creek and Roza recreation sites.

8. Mark the boundary of the recreation sites.

9. Conduct regular patrols of the three recreation sites.

10. Post new signs on the three recreation sites indicating change in administration.

11. Coordinate and develop a multi-agency fire ordinance. (Emphasis would be on reducing wildfires through control of campfire locations and discharge of fireworks.)

12. Prohibit use of fireworks.

Management Objective: Maintain and/or enhance the scenic, cultural and natural qualities within the Yakima River Canyon corridor.

Issues

- Yakima River Cliffs and Umtanum Ridge Area of Critical Environmental Concern.
- California Bighorn Sheep.
- Addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Management Actions

13. Restrict ORV's to designated roads on 4210.5 acres of public land in the YRC.

14. Monitor habitats for *Lomatium tuberosum* and *Erigeron basalticus* to detect changes in species numbers and habitat.

15. Establish an information program in the YRC area to assist visitors.

16. Conduct a Class II cultural resources survey of the public lands where recreation use is expected to increase. Conduct a Class I survey on all remaining lands in the YRC recreation area.

17. Restrict access to sensitive habitat areas west of the river during the lambing season, from May 1 to June 30.

18. Monitor bighorn sheep populations to detect changes in numbers and habitat use.

19. Develop habitat management plan in cooperation with the Washington Department of Wildlife to monitor and manage all wildlife habitat on public lands.

20. Prohibit additional domestic sheep grazing on public land in the YRC.

Management Objective: Provide for a diversity of recreational experiences and allow other compatible resource management opportunities.

Issues

- Land ownership.
- Camping, picnicking, day-use.

Management Actions

21. Initiate visitor education programs as necessary to allow for the maintenance and/or enhancement of wildlife populations and habitat.

22. Mark public lands along the river to minimize inadvertent or accidental trespass as necessary.

23. Acquire the following private lands in: T.16N., R. 19E., Section 7 (365.5 acres), 29 (38.84 acres), T.15N., R. 19E., Section 33 (272.31 acres). As opportunities develop, acquire other private or State owned lands in the YRC to improve recreational opportunities, to provide for protection or improvement of key fish and wildlife habitats, and to provide for the protection of significant cultural resource sites.

24. Develop site plans for Roza, Squaw Creek and Umtanum Creek recreation sites.

25. Develop a river access point in Section 6, T. 16N., R. 19E. and on lands acquired in Section 7. Designate from 14 to 16 primitive campsites at this site.

26. Control noxious weeds on recreation sites using mechanical means. (Use of herbicides will be analyzed in the district's noxious weed environmental assessment.

27. Provide for a limited number of primitive campsites at Squaw Creek (2 - 4) and Umtanum Creek (8 - 10).

Phase 2 (Management actions pertaining to river management that would be implemented by October 1991.)

- Continue to monitor visitor use.
- Develop cooperative management agreements with other agencies and private landowners within the YRC. These agreements would emphasize recreation wildlife habitat and range management activities.
- Complete Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study.
- Amend this plan to include river management considerations by 1991. (Any decisions made in the amended plan would conform to the criteria specified for a Recreational River Area. See Part VI, Yakima River Canyon Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, Classification Criteria.)

Part IV

Yakima River Canyon
Cost Estimate Summary
(In Thousand Dollars)

Facility	Year 1	2	3	4	5
Mark the boundary of the recreation sites.	0.1				
Mark public lands along the river to minimize inadvertent or accidental trespass.	3.0				
Move boat ramp on the Roza Recreation Site.					
Project Planning/Design	2.5				
Construction	5.0				
Upgrade rest room facilities to BLM standards.					
Project Planning/Design	1.0				
Construction	39.0				
Construct traffic control barriers at the Recreation Sites.					
Project Planning	1.0				
Survey & Design	2.0				
Construction	9.0				
Construct boat ramp at the Squaw Creek Recreation Site.					
Project Planning/Design	0.5				
Construction	3.5				
Develop a river access point in Section 6, T. 16 N., R. 19 E.					
Project Planning	3.0				
Land & Easement Acquisition		6.0*			
Project Survey & Design		3.0			
Construction			15.0	7.0	
Facility Operations Maintenance and Law Enforcement	40.0	40.0	40.0	30.0	30.0
Construct Information Stations at the Recreation Sites.	3.0				
Campsite Design/Construction at Squaw Creek and Umtanum Creek Recreation Sites.		3.0			
Total	112.6	52.0	55.0	37.0	30.0

*Assumes acquisition through exchange.

Part V

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Introduction

The interdisciplinary team of resource specialists from the Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District, analyzed a No Action Alternative and the management actions identified in Part III of this management plan. This environmental assessment was included in the Draft Yakima River Canyon Recreation Management Plan. It was made available to the public for review for 60 days on June 15, 1988. A few modifications to the initial plan were necessary as a result of public comment. The attached Environmental Assessment Summary includes the analyses of these changes. During the course of the analysis no significant impacts were identified.

Determination

On the basis of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment and all other information available to me, it is my determination that the proposed Yakima River Canyon Recreation Management Plan does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment (a finding of no significant impact). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is unnecessary and will not be prepared. In addition, the management plan is in conformance with the approved Spokane District Resource Management Plan and implementation of the plan would not require a land use plan amendment.

James F. Fisher NOV 18 1988

James F. Fisher Date
Wenatchee Resource Area Manager

Environmental Assessment Summary—OR 130 08 14

Purpose and Need for the Proposal

This plan is needed to provide management direction for Umtanum Creek, Squaw Creek, and Roza Recreation Sites in the YRC because in July of 1987, the Washington State Department of Wildlife (WSDW) notified BLM that the existing cooperative agreement which gave the WSDW jurisdiction over these sites would terminate on May 1, 1988. At that time BLM would be required to assume total management of the three recreation sites.

Another reason for this plan is to provide BLM with a basis for making management decisions relating to the other public lands within the Yakima River Canyon (YRC) and provide BLM with a mechanism to gather information over the next three years for the purpose of preparing a River Management Plan for the YRC.

Description of the Proposed Action and Alternative

Proposed Action

The proposal is to implement the 27 management actions identified below.

1. Promote water safety etiquette at the boat launches and rafting take-out points.

2. Redesign the Roza recreation site with emphasis on reducing congestion and designate it as a day-use area.

3. Improve the boat ramp at the Squaw Creek recreation site.

4. Upgrade restroom facilities to BLM standards.

5. Construct traffic control barriers at the three recreation sites.

6. Designate separate parking areas for passenger vehicles and other vehicles with boat trailers at the Roza recreation site.

7. Establish no-parking areas at the boat ramps and floater take-out points at Squaw Creek and Roza recreation sites.

8. Mark the boundary of the recreation sites.

9. Conduct regular patrols of the three recreation sites.

10. Post new signs on the three recreation sites indicating change in administration.

11. Coordinate and develop a multi-agency fire ordinance. (Emphasis would be on reducing wildfires through control of campfire locations and discharge of fireworks.)

12. Prohibit use of fireworks.

13. Restrict ORV's to designated roads on 4,210.5 acres of public land in the YRC.

14. Monitor habitats for *Lomatium tuberosum* and *Erigeron basalticus* to detect changes in species numbers and habitat.

15. Establish an information program in the YRC area to assist visitors.

16. Conduct a Class II cultural resources survey of the public lands where recreation use is expected to increase. Conduct a Class I survey on all remaining lands in the YRC recreation area.

17. Restrict access to sensitive habitat areas west of the river during the lambing season, from May 1 to June 30, to authorized individuals only.

18. Monitor bighorn sheep populations to detect changes in numbers and habitat use.

19. Develop habitat management plan in cooperation with the Washington Department of Wildlife to monitor and manage all wildlife habitat on public lands.

20. Prohibit additional domestic sheep grazing on public land in the YRC.

21. Initiate visitor education programs as necessary to allow for the maintenance and/or enhancement of wildlife populations and habitat.

22. Mark public lands along the river to minimize inadvertent or accidental trespass as necessary.

23. Acquire the following private lands in: T. 16 N., R. 19 E., Section 7 (365.5 acres), Section 29 (38.84 acres), T. 15 N., R. 19 E., Section 33 (272.31 acres). As opportunities develop, acquire other private- or State-owned lands in the YRC to improve recreational opportunities, to provide for protection or improvement of key fish and wildlife habitats, and to provide for the protection of significant cultural resource sites.

24. Develop site plans for Roza, Squaw Creek and Umtanum Creek recreation sites.

25. Develop a river access point in Section 6, T. 16 N., R. 19 E and on lands acquired in Section 7. Designate from 14 to 16 primitive campsites at this site.

26. Control noxious weeds on recreation sites using mechanical means. (Use of herbicides and biological control agencts will be analyzed in the district's environmental assessment on noxious weeds.)

27. Provide for a limited number of primitive campsites at Squaw Creek (2 - 4) and Umtanum Creek (8 - 10).

No Action Alternative

Under this alternative the three recreation sites would be closed. Facilities would be removed and river access points would be barricaded.

Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action

The following narrative summarizes environmental impacts of this proposal.

Soil and Vegetation

There would be minor amounts of soil erosion associated with the proposed surface disturbing activities such as campsite improvement, construction of boat ramps and construction of traffic control structures.

Control of noxious weeds by hand pulling and grubbing would reduce soil erosion from the infested areas as native species become established. It would reduce the spread of noxious weeds to adjacent public and private lands. Repetitive treatments would be necessary to effect control.

Recreation

Restricting access to sensitive bighorn sheep habitat from May 1 to June 30 of each year would decrease areas available for hiking. This restriction would decrease disturbance to the bighorn sheep habitat during the crucial lambing period. This impact is not anticipated to significantly affect the recreation opportunities of the area.

Control of noxious weeds would enhance the visual quality of the recreation sites and other public lands in the YRC. Designating campsites and campsite improvements would increase recreational quality by dispersing use and limiting over crowding.

ORV restriction would not result in any significant impacts since this action is a continuation of the existing policy.

Grazing Management

Prohibiting the grazing of additional domestic sheep on public land would decrease the likelihood of domestic sheep diseases infecting bighorn sheep. This restriction would not significantly affect production of domestic sheep. The current authorized sheep lease is located in the southern end of the canyon and on the east side of the river, consequently they are somewhat isolated from bighorn sheep populations. The existing grazing leases, including the 32 AUM's authorized for domestic sheep, have not resulted in any significant problems to date. BLM regulations preclude elimination of existing leases without additional monitoring data. Therefore, intensive monitoring of bighorn sheep and domestic sheep will be necessary to determine if additional restrictions are needed.

No Action

Under the no action alternative recreation opportunities would be curtailed. Toilets and trash collection facilities would be removed; consequently related health hazards could develop. Closing of river access points would create traffic safety hazards. All of the 4,210 acres of public land would remain open for the grazing of domestic sheep. An indirect impact associated with domestic sheep grazing is the possibility of transmission of diseases to bighorn sheep populations.

This alternative could result in significant impacts relative to recreation and wildlife habitat in the Yakima River Canyon.

Persons, Groups and Agencies Consulted

Pamela Camp, Botanist
James F. Fisher, Area Manager
Neal Hedges, Wildlife Biologist
Judy Thompson, Archaeologist
Dana Peterson, Range Conservationist
Gene Wehmeyer, Recreation Technician
Gary Yeager, Planning & Environmental Coordinator

Washington State Department of Wildlife
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

Part VI

Yakima River Canyon Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study

Introduction

During the comment period on the draft recreation management plan several recommendations were made from the general public to conduct a study to include the Yakima River in the National Wild and Scenic River System. This eligibility study is being conducted in response to these recommendations.

General Setting

The Yakima River is one of the principal streams draining the east slope of the Cascade Mountains. The river study segment meanders through the Yakima Canyon in a southerly direction for a distance of about 18.5 miles. See Map.

The elevation at the north end of the canyon is 1,440 feet and drops about 10.8 feet per mile, to 1,240 feet at the south end at the Roza Recreation Site.

The main tributaries to the river in the planning unit are Umtanum Creek, Burbank Creek, Squaw Creek and Roza Creek.

As a result of the arid climate of eastern Washington the vegetation in the Yakima River Canyon is dominated by a big sagebrush *(Artemisia tridentada)*, bluebunch wheatgrass *(Agropyron spicatum)* plant community.

At the higher elevations and on the north exposures where the soil is moderately deep, Cusick bluegrass *(Poa cusickii)* and Idaho fescue *(Festuca idahoenisis)* are found in the plant composition.

Ponderosa pine *(Pinus ponderosa)* trees are scattered throughout the lower elevations and bottomlands with alder, aspen, dogwood, cottonwood and willows more or less forming a greenbelt along the river's edge.

The Yakima River is unique in the way it affected the geomorphology of the area. By cutting through both the Manastash and Umtanum Ridges, the river affords an opportunity for visitors to view geologic formations and land forms in a relatively small geographic area.

The Yakima River Canyon is known through out the northwest for outstanding recreational opportunities. People come for miles to hunt, fish, and raft. Other activities include hiking, camping, power boating, picnicking and wildlife viewing.

Because of it's physical characteristics and recreational qualities, this segment of the Yakima River is being evaluated as a potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Eligibility Determination—Values

Scenic—Steep canyon walls, meandering river, wildlife, geography and human impacts such as dirt roads, fire trail scars, and residential developments. Rating: Outstanding

Recreation—Fishing, extensive rafting, hunting, limited boating, hiking, car camping, and wildlife viewing. Rating: Outstandingly Remarkable

Geology—Incised river gorge, extensive cliffs, diverse geomorphic and structural features such as slumps, alluvial fans, columnar basalt, folded strata. (Features typically found throughout the Columbia Basin.) Rating: Above Average

Fisheries—Rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, dolly varden, German brown trout, small mouthed bass, steelhead trout, chinook salmon, Coho salmon, white fish and spawning habitat for resident and anadromous fish. Rating: Outstandingly Remarkable

Wildlife—Mule deer, rocky mountain elk, California bighorn sheep and cougar, one of the highest concentrations of nesting raptors in Washington. (Eleven raptor species nest in the canyon and an additional nine utilize the area in the winter.) Rating: Outstandingly Remarkable

Historic—NonIndian exploration of the canyon began in 1812 and fur trapping brigades (1812– 1840's); Missionaries (1844–1857) and topographical engineers (1853–1860's) were intermittent visitors and residents in the canyons; brief flurry of gold mining in the late 1850's to the early 1860's; open range cattlemen were present in 1858. Permanent farming and ranching settlement developed after 1866. Rating: Above Average

Prehistoric—Used extensively by Native Americans prior to arrival of the white man; some settlements existed in the canyon. Rating: Above Average

Determination of Eligibility

Classification Criteria

1. Wild River Areas—Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.

2. Scenic River Areas—Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.

3. Recreational River Areas—Those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

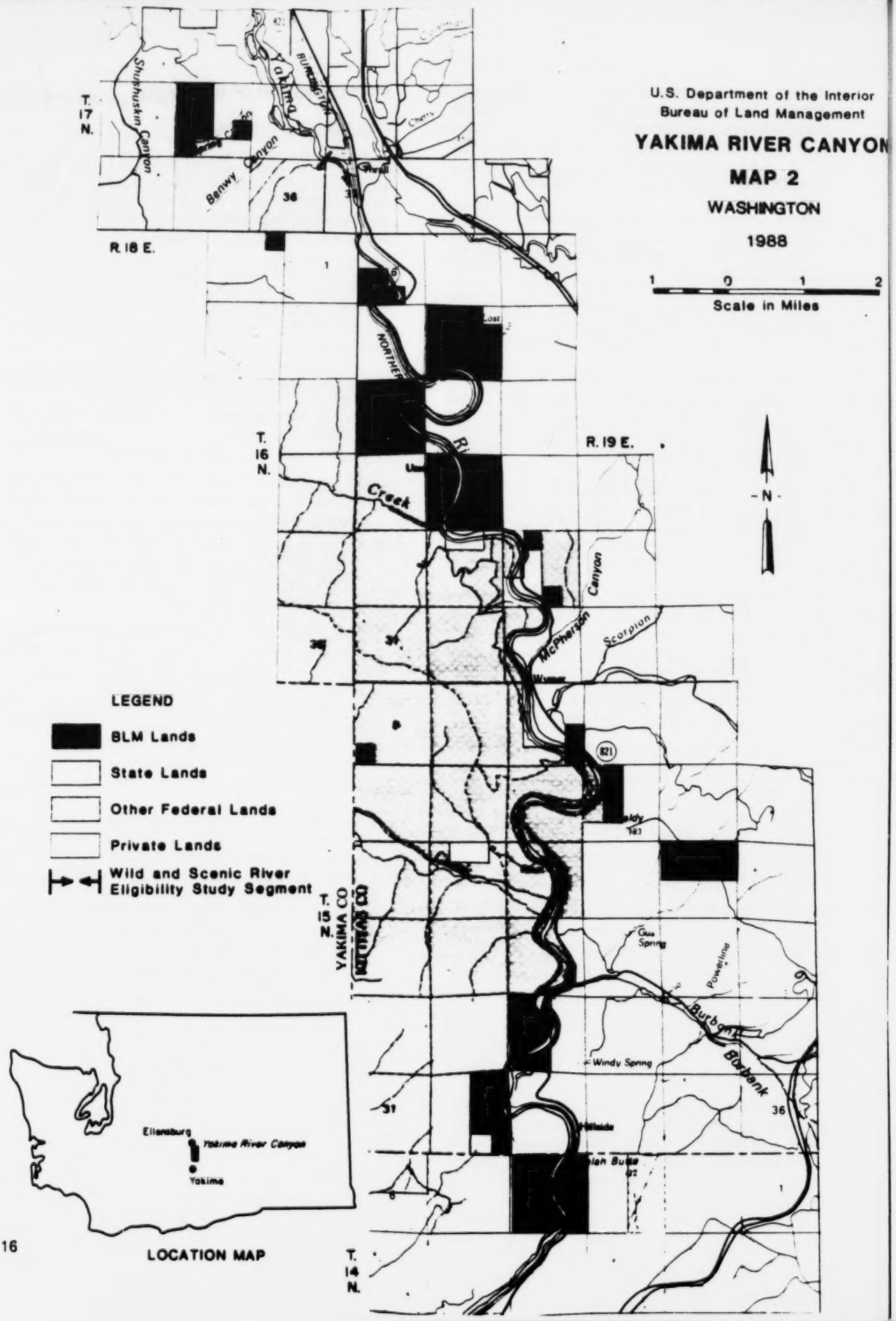
Narrative

The Yakima River in this study segment is free flowing down to the Roza Recreation Site where the back waters of the Roza Dam pool begin to develop. The quality of the water is considered excellent and is used extensively for irrigation.

The shoreline shows forms of development throughout most of the river study segment. On the east and west side of the river, both agricultural and other manmade developments can be observed. A stretch of the Burlington Northern Railroad parallels the entire western shoreline, and Highway 821 parallels and provides access along the eastern shoreline.

Conclusion

Due to the readily available access provided by Highway 821, and the rather extensive shoreline developments such as campgrounds, railroad, highway, agriculture and so forth, the Yakima River does not meet Eligibility Criteria for either a Wild River Area or for a Scenic River Area. However, due to the outstanding recreational values associated with fishery, recreation and wildlife, it does meet Eligibility Criteria number 3 for a Recreational River Area.


U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
YAKIMA RIVER CANYON
MAP 2
WASHINGTON
1988
1 0 1 2
Scale in Miles
T. 17 N.
R. 18 E.
R. 19 E.
T. 16 N.
T. 15 N.
T. 14 N.
YAKIMA CO
Shushuskin Canyon
Yakima
Benwy Canyon
Creek
Canyon
McPherson
Scorpion
Gas Spring
Powerline
Burbank
Windy Spring
N
LEGEND
BLM Lands
State Lands
Other Federal Lands
Private Lands
Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study Segment
Ellensburg
Yakima River Canyon
Yakima
LOCATION MAP

Part VII

Public Comments

A draft of this document was made available to the general public for review from mid-June through mid-August. During that time three public meetings were held to receive comments and respond to questions about this plan, one in Yakima, Ellensburg and Bellevue on July 18, 19, and 20, 1988, respectively. A total of 118 responses, both written and verbal, were received.

Comments received were from both individuals and organizations. In many cases, a single response would address a number of different subjects. Rather than deal with each response as a separate entity, responses were consolidated and summarized under a variety of different subject headings such as camping, grazing, enforcement, and education.

Camping

A few of the comments received concerning camping supported the proposal to phase out camping on BLM lands. However, the majority of those commenting expressed the desire that some form of camping be allowed to continue. Suggestions ranging from a fully developed campground to primitive sites were received. The majority commenting favored the less developed or primitive campsites.

Response:
As a result of the comments, the recommendation was revised to allow for a limited number of primitive campsites at both Umtanum and Squaw Creek Recreation Sites. The number and locations of the campsites will be specified in the respective site plans which are being designed. Preliminary indications are that between 2 to 4 campsites will be allowed at the Squaw Creek Recreation Site and 8 to 12 at the Umtanum Creek Recreation site. An additional 14 to 16 campsites will be designated at the proposed recreational site in section 6 and 7 T. 16 N., R. 19 E. The Roza Recreation Site will be designated for day use only.

Grazing

The proposal to prohibit domestic sheep grazing in the YRC met with both opposition and suppport. The opposition focused on the existing sheep lease in the southern end of the canyon. The comment was that for over 20 years domestic sheep grazing has been a legitimate authorized use and has not caused any problems. The conflicting view point was that current studies indicated that domestic sheep could transmit diseases to bighorn sheep. Still other comments expressed the desire to eliminate livestock grazing entirely.

A related concern involves the potential impact that bighorn sheep are having on the native plant populations.

Response:
In view of the current situation regarding domestic sheep over the past 20 years, and BLM's regulatory restrictions concerning implementation of changes in livestock use, BLM will permit existing leases authorizing sheep grazing to continue. However, no new grazing leases for domestic sheep or changes in class from cattle to sheep will be permitted.

User Fees

It was suggested that BLM charge user fees to help defray the cost of law enforcement, and general maintenance of the recreation sites.

Response:
We initially considered imposing user fees. However, regulations preclude BLM from charging fees for the type of campsites and facilities that exist or are proposed for the YRC.

Weed Control

The proposal to control noxious weeds through mechanical means was questioned because of its relative ineffectiveness. It also was suggested that the use of herbicides be considered.

Response:
Mechanical methods used to control some noxious weeds are inefficient; however, limited success in controlling diffuse knapweed has occurred. Mechanical control is very labor intensive. Therefore, alternative methods of controlling knapweed in the YRC and in other places on the District will be evaluated. This will be documented and evaluated in a district-wide noxious weed environmental assessment which is scheduled to be prepared in 1989.

Seasonal Restrictions on Hiking

There was some concern over restricting access to the public lands west of the river during the lambing season (May 1–June 30). It was believed that this restriction was unnecessary and that it would adversely affect the hiking opportunities on public land.

Response:
Most of the concern focused on the Umtanum Creek trail. However, the proposed closure involves the area approximately one mile north of the trail. Therefore, it is believed that the impacts from this restriction will be insignificant.

Fire Restriction

Private land owners in the YRC area expressed their growing concern over the occurrence of wildfires. This year there have been two such fires in the canyon. These fires were related to recreational activities such as unattended campfires or carelessness with cigarettes or fireworks.

Response:
As a result of these concerns, BLM has officially prohibited the use of fireworks and other incendiary devices, excluding fusees or flares for emergency purposes, on all public lands. In addition to this restriction, campfires will be permitted in designated firepits or boxes only.

Land Acquisition

Generally, the comments supported the land acquisition proposal. Some of these comments offered suggestions on specific parcels to acquire.

Response:
As stated in the draft plan, we will continue to pursue acquisition on a willing seller basis of both private- and State-owned lands within the YRC to improve recreational opportunities, to provide for protection or improvement of key fish and wildlife habitats and to provide for the protection of significant cultural resource sites. Funding limitations dictate that most acquisition will be through land exchanges.

Health and Sanitation

Almost everyone commenting expressed a concern for river safety. Conflicts between rafters and powerboaters, primarily congestion at the Roza take out point, was a major concern. Others commented on the need for improved sanitary facilities at the recreation sites along with installation of more trash collection facilities.

Response:
As a result of these concerns and the fact that these recreation sites initially were designed as fishing and hunting access points, these recreation sites will be redesigned to include considerations for rafting, camping, picnicking, and power boating activities.

Off Road Vehicles

There was concern that ORV's were not addressed in this plan. Most of the individuals commenting were of the opinion that all the public land should be closed to ORV's.

Response:
Under the previous cooperative agreement with the WSDW, all the public land involved was restricted to ORV's. Since this agreement was terminated on May 1, 1988, a temporary restriction to protect wildlife values was made. The text has been amended to indicate this restriction (see Part V). This temporary restriction will be formalized in the next district Resource Management Plan Amendment.

Boundaries

Some of the land owners in the YRC were concerned over the location of the planning area boundaries. It was believed that the existing boundaries would cause confusion over who owned or had legal jurisdiction over what land.

Response:
The indicated boundaries were for planning purposes only. There was no intent to imply that BLM had jurisdiction over anything but the public land contained within these boundaries. However, in view of this concern the boundaries are eliminated entirely. The emphasis is placed on the public land indicated on the map on page 3, and more specifically the three recreation sites that BLM manages.

Education

Nearly everyone commenting on the draft plan expressed the need for and support of BLM's proposed education program focusing on river etiquette, history and geology of the Yakima River Canyon. Some indicated that the recreation plan should include a more detailed description of these subjects.

Response:
The information included in the recreation plan is for management of the recreation sites and the public land in the YRC. We believe expanding the history, geology and general descriptions of the flora and fauna of the YRC can best be handled in specific brochures or pamphlets that will be more widely available to the general public than the recreation plan itself.

Enforcement

As in the discussion on education, nearly everyone stated that enforcement is essential in implementing the recreation plan. The concern is whether BLM can enforce the decisions made in the plan and how.

Response:
A recreation patrol ranger has been assigned full time to the YRC during the high-use periods. BLM maintains a law enforcement agreement with the Kittitas County Sheriff's Department to assist when necessary. Additional BLM law enforcement personnel will be used as needed.

Other Comments To be Addressed in Phase II

Trails, View Points Along the Highway, Boat Restrictions, Wild and Scenic River Designation

Any decisions regarding trails must include discussions with the Washington Department of Wildlife and affected private land owners. The designation of additional viewpoints along Highway 821 has been referred to the Department of Transportation. Any restrictions on boating in the YRC must come from Kittitas County authorities, since they have jurisdiction over river traffic. Designation as a Recreation River under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act can only be made by Congress. However, an eligibility study was conducted and it was determined that the Yakima River does meet the minimum requirements of a Recreational River (see Part VI).

BLM-OR-PT-88-15-1792

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